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(56) Documents Cited
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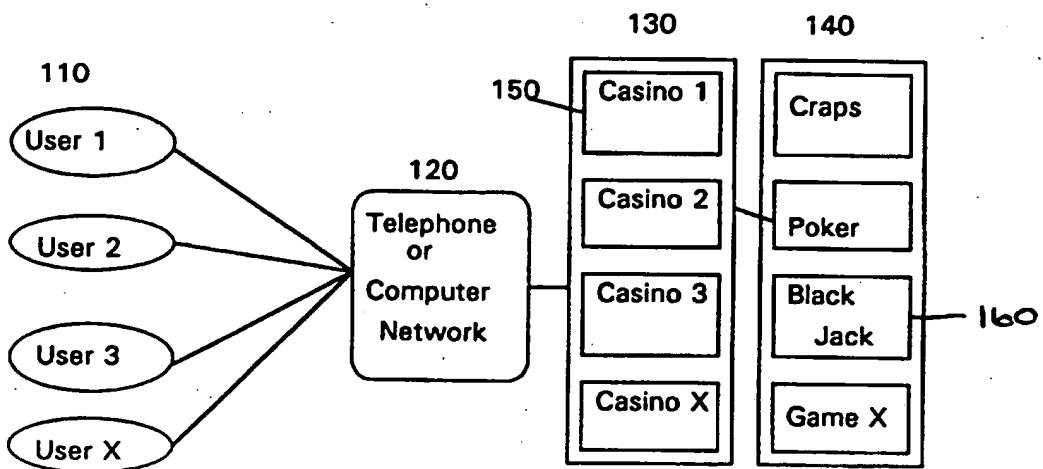
(58) Field of Search

UK CL (Edition O) A6H HLM
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(54) Gaming network

(57) A gaming network comprises a plurality of gaming stations (110) networked via computer or telephone links (120) and also, attached to the network, a plurality of gambling houses (130) offering a variety of competing games. The network may also comprise means to credit and debit money to the players.

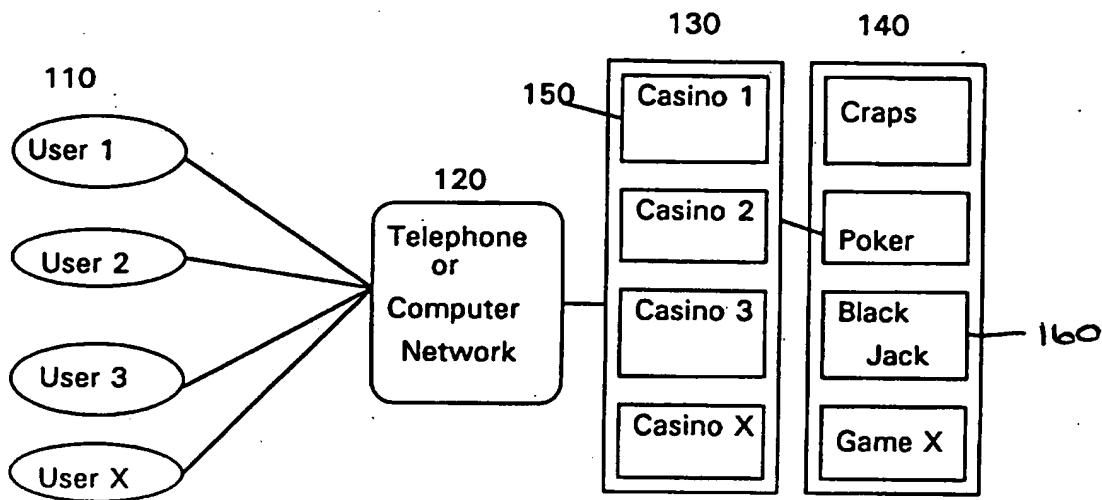
FIG 1



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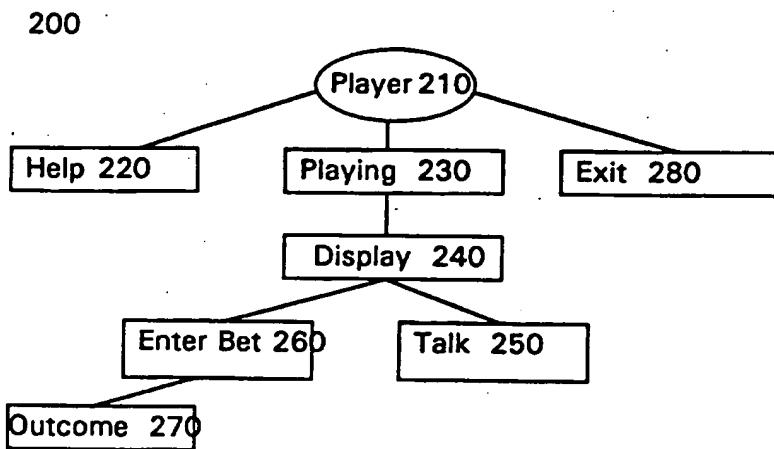
Drawing 1/4

FIG 1



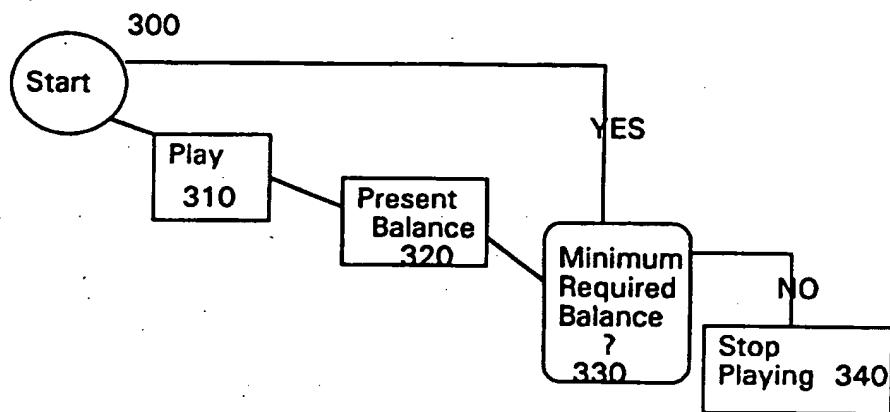
Drawing 2/4

FIG 2



Drawing 3/4

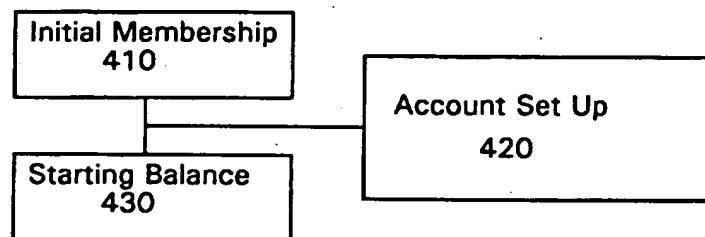
FIG. 3



Drawing 4/4

FIG 4

400



A Method of Gaming via Computer and Telephone Networks

This invention relates generally to a method of playing games and allowing participants to place bets by use of a terminal and computer or telephone networks.

In Gaming establishments, such as casinos or the like, players can choose the type of games which they wish to play and place bets by using playing chips purchased beforehand. The popular games are slot machines, Black Jack, Roulette, Poker and Craps.

The disadvantage of this game playing technique is that, the players must drive to places where gambling is accessible. Especially during inclement weather, this can discourage many gaming participants. In addition, during Holidays, the gaming spaces at casinos may be limited and thus limiting the number of gaming participants.

In response to the foregoing drawbacks, a system has been developed that allows players to play the casino games by use of computer terminals or the like connecting them to a gaming establishments via the telephone networks or computer networks including but not limited to Internet. The player can log onto a clearing house for the participating gaming establishments. A playing credit will be issued to the player after the player advances funds from the player's credit card or a pre-established account with a financial institution or the gaming establishments. After funding is established, the player then has his or her selections of gaming establishments the player wishes to connect to. Through the graphical user interface of the player's computer monitor, the player may play many of

the aforementioned games in real time, but sitting in the comfort of the player's house.

Disclosures relating to this general subject matter include the following US Patents: Leaden, US Patent 5,327,485; Dickinson, et al., US Patent 5,265,874; Cidade, et al., US Patent 3,906,192.

Leaden 5,327,485 shows a telephone lottery play system. A player can purchase in advance a lottery booklet with numbered playslips for playing the lottery. Thereafter, the player can call an interactive voice activated and response computer via his or her telephone. Through the interactive computer, the player can give the lottery number and place the bet. The Leaden invention does not provide a visual graphical interface between the player and the gaming establishments. The Leaden invention only provides voice or sound interface.

Dickinson et al. 5,265,874 discloses a cashless gaming apparatus and method. Primarily, the gaming establishment issues a credit card like an ID card to the player in advance. The ID card is pre-validated with monetary value. The player then takes said card to any gaming terminal and uses the card instead of coins or chips. This method of credit validation requires issuance of physical ID card while the present invention maintains the accountancy without the usage of a card. And via on-line information processing.

Cidade, et al. 3,906,192 disclosures a punch card for the use in control, recording and collection of data in connection with betting systems. The present invention processes player's information on-line and in real time without the process of reducing player's information on a tangible material.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG 1 illustrates a particular embodiment of a gaming method via computer and telephone networks.

FIG 2 is a flow chart illustrating the steps a player may take after the player enters the gaming house.

FIG 3 is a flow chart illustrating the steps performed by the gaming house to ensure that a player has a positive balance so the player can continue to play.

FIG 4 is a flow chart illustrating the steps performed by the clearing house for the gaming houses to set up an account for the user.

Detailed Description of the Drawings

The gaming system and apparatus of the present invention is broadly denoted by numeral 100 and is illustrated in block form in FIG 1. The system 100 is made of four major entities, namely, user's terminals 110, telephone or computer networks 120, gaming houses 130, and selection of games 140.

The gaming houses 130 included the participating gaming establishments 150.

The selections of games 140 includes the various categories of games such as Black Jack 160 being offered on the system.

The options of the player after the player enters the gaming house is broadly denoted by numeral 200 and is illustrated in the form of a flow chart in FIG 2.

Player 210 can play the game 230 or ask for help 220 concerning the game 230. If the player 210 begins the game 230, the house will display the general format 240 for that particular game. The player then enters bet 260 and the outcome of the game 270 is displayed moments later. If the player chooses to exit the game 280 the player can click on an exit icon to do so.

The steps taken by the gaming house to determine whether the player has funds to continue playing is shown in FIG 3 and generally denoted by numeral 300. After the player clicks on the play icon 310, the gaming house computer checks the present balance 320 of the player. The gaming house computer checks to see whether the present balance is equal to or is greater than the minimum required balance 330. If the answer is yes, the player is allowed to continue. If the answer is no, the player is not permitted to continue 340.

To set up an account of a new player, the gaming clearing house performs the steps illustrated in the flow chart of FIG 4 and generally denoted by numeral 400. At step 410, the player's relevant information is entered into the gaming clearing house's computer. Next, at step 420, the computer sets up an account for the player and provides the player with relevant information including but not limited to: ID Number, Password and starting playing credit 430.

It is to be noted that although FIG 1 shows only 4 major entities, more could be added to further define the overall scheme.

The above description is meant to be illustrative and therefore is not to be restrictive.

Claims

1. The apparatus and method the present invention operates in such a way that, a player with a computer and a graphical monitor connects to a centralised clearing house from the gaming establishments. The player gets funding by using his or her credit cards or a pre-established gaming house account.
2. Within the above claim the primary object of this invention is to take full advantage of the ever expanding telephone and computer networks and use it so that it is akin to telecommuting in the area of gaming.
3. Within the above claim the player can select the gaming house he or she wants to play at by clicking its representative icon on the computer screen.
4. Within the above claims and after entering the gaming house via the computer, local house rules are displayed and read to the player. The player selects the game by clicking on the game's icon. The player places the bet by clicking on the chip's icon and moves the desired the desired number of chips to the betting zone by the usage of the computer pointing device, typically a mouse.
5. Finally, within the above claims when the player wishes to cease playing, the player can click on a "CASH OUT" icon and the player's monetary balance will be displayed. If the players balance is positive the player is given numerous options as to how to convert it into physical money.